Mother Owl

Bedtime Stories

Original Illustrations

MOTHER OWL AND FATHER FROG

Mother Owl

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What Happened Years Ago

MOTHER OWL is very wise and she can tell of many things she has both seen and heard. She had promised to tell her babies a story if they would not try to fly from the nest too soon. Bright Eyes, the largest and strongest, was the most anxious of all to leave the nest.

One evening Bright Eyes felt that he could wait no longer to hear that story, as his wings were so strong that he wished to go out into the big, wide world that evening.

"What do you wish me to tell you about?" asked his mother.

Bright Eyes knew nothing about all the wonderful

things in the world, for he had never seen it, you know. While he was thinking, he heard a sound to which he had often listened. He wondered what it could be, but he had never asked.

"Mother, tell me about that. What is it?"

Mother Owl closed her eyes slowly and almost laughed. "That is Father Frog singing," she replied.

"THAT IS FATHER FROG SINGING"

For a while they listened. Father Frog was singing with all his might.

"My dear," she began, "you have, of course, never seen Father Frog or any of his family, but I will tell you a story about them which has been passed down to me from ages past. There is no truth in it, I think,

but there are many who do believe it, and it is very interesting.

"Once upon a time, long, long ago, a goddess was driven away from her home with her two babies. She could find no place to rest, for if she sat down even for a minute her enemy would come up and drive her on. She became very thirsty and tired, but no one would even give her food or drink or a bed.

"By and by she came to a clear lake of water, and she knelt on the bank to drink. Her babies were also as tired and thirsty as she. But there were people close by who owned that pond of water, and when they saw the goddess kneeling to drink they told her to go away. She begged for water for herself and babies, but still they refused. She did not go away when she was told, for she could hardly move on account of being so thirsty and tired. Then these people began to throw stones at her, and they waded into the water to make it dirty.

"This soon made the goddess angry, for she could see that they had plenty of water to spare. 'I'll make

you regret this,' she said, 'and you will have to spend the rest of your lives in this water. You will some time wish you had been kind to me.'

"Very soon these people found their voices growing

"THEN THESE PEOPLE BEGAN TO THROW STONES AT HER"

harsh, just like Father Frog's. Their throats became bloated, their mouths grew larger, and their necks shrunk until they had none. Their backs turned green, and their feet became webbed so they could swim. Now, Bright Eyes, can you imagine what they were?"

Mother Owl looked at her baby lovingly. Bright

Eyes had taken in every word and had not moved while he listened.

"Yes, mother," he said, "these people were changed into frogs."

"You are right, my dear," replied Mother Owl. "It was a dreadful thing to refuse water to the thirsty. But, Bright Eyes, I told you at the first that it might not be true, and you need not believe it unless you wish. It is just an old, old story that has been going round. Father Frog is a very nice old fellow, and I am sure he would never believe in doing such a thing."

When Bright Eyes left his nest that evening he sailed over quietly where he could see Father Frog. He sat for a long time looking at him and listening to the singing, and then he went to his mother.

"I have seen Father Frog," he said. "He seems to be a fine old fellow and I don't believe a word of that story."

Tapper Woodpecker learns to Save

"DID YOU ever hear about how Tapper Woodpecker learned to save?" asked Mother Owl.

Robin Redbreast was listening at a worm under the ground. She flew to a limb and told Mother Owl to please tell her how Tapper learned to save, as she had often wondered, and would not have a better chance than right now to hear about it.

"Long, long ago Tapper Woodpecker's ancestors came back from the south and found snow all over the ground. They had been told that they were coming too early, but the Woodpeckers would have it their way. And they got into trouble, just as people are very apt to do when they think they know better than any one else. They looked all round, but could find

nothing except few weed seeds. Finally warmer weather came and the snow went away, but the Woodpeckers had learned a lesson. They kept thinking about it all summer, and when the nuts began to drop and acorns were ripe they knew they would have to make a move toward having something saved for the next spring.

"Old Tapper Woodpecker and his wife tried to study it out, but the more they thought about it the more puzzled they became. Finally, Jack Squirrel, who was busy as he could be laying away in his cellar, asked the Woodpeckers why they didn't do as he was doing? They thought this might be just the thing, so they cleaned out their old house in the dead walnut tree and chucked it full. They had corn, wheat, acorns and several other things in that hole, and they flew away to the south again to spend the winter.

"They were so encouraged over this that they came back earlier the next spring, for they thought they would be sure to have a plenty to eat from their storehouse until the days became warmer. Now, what do

you think? Old Tapper Woodpecker and his wife were dumbfounded when they went to get their food, for all of it was gone!

"It is not very pleasant to come home tired and hungry only to find that some one has gone off with

"SOME SAID JACK SQUIRREL HAD STOLEN IT"

your nice dinner and has not even said 'thank you' for it.

"Old Tapper almost fainted away. Here they had come back so early, and the weather was so cold and the ground covered with snow. They inquired of sev-

eral neighbors about what had become of that food, but none of them would give any reasonable answers. And, after all, Tapper Woodpecker and his wife would have been just as hungry even if they had known where the food had gone. Some said Jack Squirrel had stolen it, and others said the food had begun to spoil so much that Johnny Blue Jay had thrown it all out of the hole because he was afaid it would make the Woodpeckers sick if they ate it. And so it went. Nobody ever did know for certain what became of that food, but I noticed that Jack Squirrel always broke into a laugh whenever the subject was mentioned. But you know he is a very noisy fellow, always chattering and laughing and having a wonderful time that he does not tell any one about.

"Well,. the Woodpeckers had to get along once more on weed seed until the warm days came, but they said they would find another way to save for the following spring. Nice fat worms were not to be found every day, and that was one thing that Old Tapper Woodpecker desired.

"Finally, he asked Grandmother Nature. She was more than ready to tell him what to do, and she could tell him something that would just suit him. She knew Woodpeckers like to peck holes in trees, for their bills are made for that purpose, and Tapper could as well do something like that for storing food.

"She told him to peck holes in the trees just large enough to hold an acorn. An acorn was to be put in each of these holes with the tip of the acorn pointing inward. Tapper pecked holes in trees and did as he was told. He knew that fine, fat worms often lived in acorns, but he didn't see how this was going to have anything to do with acorns in the holes which he pecked in trees. Tapper was wise enough to obey Grandmother Nature even though he did not understand, for he knew that she always takes good care of her children.

"Grandmother Nature said, 'Wait until next spring, Tapper. When you come back to eat the food you have saved, just peck a hole in the ends of those acorns and see what you will find.' She had to laugh to her-

self when she thought how greedy Tapper Woodpecker would be after he discovered what was inside those acorns."

Robin Redbreast was again listening to a worm in the ground, and Mother Owl knew it would do no good to continue that story unless Robin paid closer attention.

"Now, Robin Redbreast," said Mother Owl, "listen to what Tapper Woodpecker found when he came back. It was strange that the Woodpeckers were not in a hurry to get back that spring. They waited until pleasant days before they came. But when they went to look at those acorns they saw they were still in the holes where they had put them.

"Old Tapper stuck his bill into one of those acorns and then looked at his wife. She was wondering what he would find, and she was just waiting to see what it was before she went to work opening acorns. Tapper gave another whack at that acorn and one whole side fell off. Now what do you suppose he saw? One of the finest, fattest worms any bird ever looked

at. Those two Woodpeckers became very greedy and they opened one acorn after another the whole day long, always finding a fat worm in each of them. Within a week there wasn't an acorn left that they had saved, but the weather was becoming warmer, so other food was plentiful. You see, those worms had been fattening all winter in those acorns, and they couldn't get out because they usually get out the sides or the tip of the acorns. Old Tapper pushed those acorns in far enough so that the worms could not get out."

"I couldn't do that way," said Robin, "for I don't eat acorns and I couldn't manage to put one in a hole in a tree."

"Every one is not made to do the same things. Mother Earth has different plans for her children. That is why she does not make them all just alike.

"It is because Grandmother Nature never intended for you to do such things, anyway, Robin Redbreast. You haven't the right kind of bill for pecking holes and your feet are not of the kind to cling to the sides of trees."

"That's true," replied Robin, "but I am contented as I am for I have no trouble at all in finding plenty when I come back each spring. But did the Woodpeckers continue to lay up acorns for keeping?"

Dear me, yes," laughed Mother Owl. "They lay up a great many, and they are always thinking about what they will find when they come back in the spring."

Where the Brook was going

MISS BOSSIE, the pretty white heifer who lived in the big pasture, never could understand where the brook was going. Often she would go down to the brook, look at herself in the clear water, and then wonder and wonder where in the world that brook was going. She asked her mother and all the other cows, but none of them knew a thing about it. She asked the brook itself, but it went right on and never answered her questions.

The more Miss Bossie thought it over every day the more anxious she became to know about the journey the brook was taking. By and by Mother Owl heard of it, for Miss Bossie often lay down right under the tree and talked to herself about that little brook.

"I'll tell you where the brook is going, Miss Bossie," said Mother Owl at sundown one hot day after the pretty heifer had quenched her thirst in the sparkling brook. "This little brook is going to the sea. Men call this sea the ocean. It is very large and deep.

"Some little brooks go dry in the hot days, but this one never does, for it comes from a large spring. That accounts for the coolness of the water. It has a track or road in which it travels on and on to the river. Other little brooks join in for company before it arrives at the river, and then we call them a creek. The river is very glad to take them with him, and such a gurgling, laughing and roaring company you never heard as that river and all his little brooks are as they go to the big, wide ocean.

"This little brook once grew so large that it couldn't stay in its banks. It gathered many raindrops from a storm, and soon it crept over the fields and meadows, sweeping away lovely acres of corn and wheat. That little brook had grown so large that it became angry. All little brooks do when they grow too large. So does

"I'LL TELL YOU WHERE THE BROOK IS GOING, MISS BOSSIE"

the river who has so far to travel and so many little brooks to care for."

"Well, well, Mother Owl," said Miss Bossie, "if it makes the river angry why does he bother with these noisy little brooks? I wouldn't; would you?"

"Hoo, hoo, Miss Bossie; yes, I would if I were a river. The river is always glad to take in the brooks, and it does him good in many ways, even if it does make him angry. You see the more little brooks he gathers up the better it is for men who have boats to sail. If there were no brooks the river would die. I don't believe the river or the brooks would ever get angry if the thirsty land did not cry out for rain so loudly. The thirsty plants cry for water, and then the winds gather the clouds and tell them to send the rain."

Miss Bossie chewed her cud and switched the flies from her pretty round back.

"This little brook will never know who it is by the time it gets to the sea," continued Mother Owl. "Now, isn't that funny?"

Miss Bossie swallowed her cud and jumped up. She said "Bah!" several times to call her mother and then ran away to tell about that little brook.

Mother Owl herself felt that she would like to fly away and see the great ocean, but she remembered that it was time to think about getting ready for winter, and she had, besides, so many neighbors whom she did not wish to leave. So she thought she would let the little brook sing her to sleep and then she would feel more like work afterwards.

As for Miss Bossie, she declared the water in the brook never tasted sweeter than it did after she had heard what Mother Owl had told her.

Why Jake Sparrow is so inquisitive

"YES," said Mother Owl one day, "I know what makes Jake Sparrow so inquisitive. Jake is dressed in a very pretty gray and brown suit that is always becoming to him, and I suppose he thinks he is not seen very much when he goes prying into other people's business, but he is. I think I won't have time now to tell about it, for I must get ready for a big dinner tomorrow."

Mother Owl flew away, and several of her neighbors who were having a fine time under that tree all felt sorry that she had to go. They called after her, but all she answered was that she would be back in about an hour.

Sure enough when she did return to that tree they

were all waiting for her, excepting Jack Coon, who said he knew all about Jake Sparrow that he cared to know, and he had never forgotten the time Jake came prying round and looked into his house. Now Jack thought such actions from a little bird like Jake Sparrow showed very bad manners indeed.

"All ready," said Mother Owl, and all sat down to listen.

"There was a time when Jake Sparrow's folks were not nearly so inquisitive as he is now; but that is not his fault. He is doing only what has been handed down to him from his ancestors.

"Once upon a time Mother Earth planned a big Thanksgiving feast for her children. I don't know how many were invited, but it certainly was a large number, all the way from old Mr. Bear and his family on down to the Sparrow and others of their size. There were a great many birds from everywhere, as well as Father Frog and his relations.

"Well, the feast was all ready and everybody sat down. Such a heap of good things! My, it would

take a long, long time to name over all those things. So everybody was waited upon by Mother Earth. She passed them everything she had on her table, and my, my! how that company did eat. Old Father Bear couldn't get enough meat and honey, and he licked the platters clean. Your great-great-grandfather couldn't get enough lettuce and cabbage, Peter Rabbit. He ate so much he was almost sick. And so it went all along that table. I am almost ashamed to tell what my own folks ate. Mother Earth whispered to Grandmother Nature that she was afraid that crowd would eat her out of house and home.

"Grandmother Nature told her not to worry, for she had her eyes on that crowd and would see that they didn't eat too much. Well, what do you think? Everybody ate so much that they wondered if there was any more left in Mother Earth's cupboard. Of course, after eating so much they were ashamed to ask her. A few whispered to each other about it, and finally Mr. Sparrow thought he would go and see.

"This Sparrow, whose name was Jake, too, got up

"MR. SPARROW THOUGHT HE WOULD GO AND SEE"

from the table and hopped over to Mother Earth's cupboard door. Everybody was looking right at him, and Mother Earth winked at her Grandmother, but she didn't say a word. She thought she would watch Jake and let him learn a lesson, if he could, right there. Just as Jake looked into the cupboard Mr. Blue Jay, who had been wiping his bill on Mother Earth's tablecloth, yelled 'Greedy! greedy!' Everybody laughed, but they felt rather foolish, for they knew they had been as greedy as anybody else. Moreover, they felt they were the cause of Jake's going to that cupboard. They felt so foolish finally that they all got right up from that table and hurried home. Jake Sparrow stayed, for he thought Blue Jay had said 'Greedy' to the others instead of him, and he never has been told differently to this day.

Of course Mr. Blue Jay was not polite or he never would have wiped his bill on Mother Earth's tablecloth. It may be that he had never been taught better, poor fellow.

"After the rest were gone, Jake Sparrow hopped off

the cupboard door and went back to the table where Mother Earth was having the dishes cleared away. Having looked into the cupboard, Jake now thought it would be funny to see what each guest had eaten. So he went around and looked into each one's empty plate. Old Father Bear's dish was so tall that Jake had to give a jump to the top of it; but he saw many queer scraps in old Father Bear's dish and it made him want to go round and look into everybody else's.

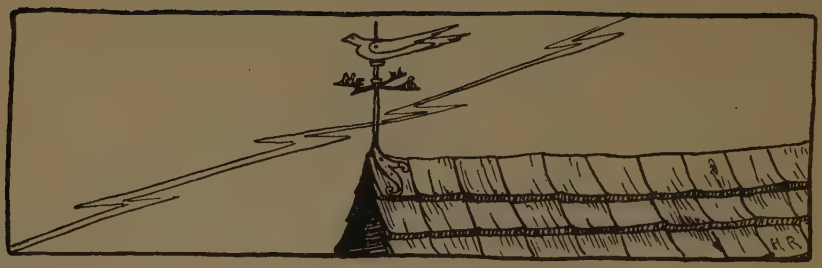
It is a great deal easier to form the habit of minding other people's business than it is to break such a habit when once we have been so foolish as to form it.

"Jake Sparrow never did get over that habit of going round and looking into things. His children have been that way ever since that big dinner and I suppose they always will be."

Mother Owl laughed several times whenever she thought of what Blue Jay had said and she almost forgot that she had seen Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk sneaking away when she began to tell about what some of the guests ate at that dinner. Some of the others

were acting as if they would much rather get away.

"Hoo, hoo!" she laughed to herself, "they were afraid I might tell them more about what their great-great-grandparents ate at that dinner. It wouldn't be any credit to any of them to hear about it, so I don't blame them."



Jack Coon and the Lightning

A THUNDER STORM had come up that afternoon and then it grew very dark. All the people of the forest were alarmed and ran home. Mother Owl and her children hurried to an old hollow tree. Jack Coon felt that he was safe from the loud thunder and the bright flashes of lightning, but the wind rose and blew so hard that he was sure his home would be blown down. Then came an awful crack of thunder, for the tree of Jack Coon's house had been struck by lightning.

Jack had been lying in a hollow limb as far up as he could climb, and the lightning had struck near the top on the opposite side, tore off great pieces of bark, and then went into the ground. How he did tremble before this had happened, but now he was so badly

shocked that he could hardly move for several minutes. When he recovered he felt sure he ought to leave that tree. It was not at all pleasant to be in such a place in a bad storm. Poor Jack Coon! He could hardly climb down.

Now it was fortunate that Mother Owl and her babies were not far away in another hollow tree. Mother Owl knew that Jack's tree had been struck and she was very much worried about him. It was still raining and the wind was blowing when she looked out of a hole and saw Jack staggering as he came down his tree, looking first to one side and then to the other. Poor Jack! She watched him and hoped he would come over to her tree for shelter. Sure enough he did turn that way, and then she called him up.

Jack Coon was yet shaking when he climbed inside the tree where Mother Owl and her family were safe.

"Are you hurt," she asked. "But of course you are not, I know. You are just scared, that's all. But it was a narrow escape."

Jack Coon felt that he would much rather not talk with all that loud thunder roaring and lightning flashing. But he realized there was no use to worry, and

"SURE ENOUGH HE DID TURN THAT WAY"

perhaps Mother Owl could help him find a better place.

"I'll tell you, Jack, this has been a bad storm and I am wondering what has become of all our neighbors. I hope they are safe."

Another loud peal of thunder came.

"That was an awful bolt of thunder that struck my house," said Jack as he looked out at the swaying tree tops.

"No, Jack," answered Mother Owl, "you are mistaken. It is not the thunder that strikes; it is the lightning. Now listen. The thunder is just the sound of the lightning as it moves so swiftly through the air. Two clouds go toward each other in the sky and each of these clouds is charged with opposite electricities—one positive and the other negative. When these clouds are a certain distance apart they rush together with a flash. This flash is the lightning. Sometimes you can see it in the sky and it looks like a long, bright line, and then we call it chain lightning. But when you see it in the sky and it looks like broad flashes then we call it sheet lightning, and is caused by reflections from chain lightning higher up. The reason it comes to the earth and does damage is because objects below attract it from the clouds."

There was another loud report and a bright flash. The lightning had struck somewhere. Jack Coon

crawled up as far as he could in the tree and hid his face; but Mother Owl and her children waited for the rain and wind to cease. It was not long before a ray of bright sunshine told them the storm was over. Mother Owl called Jack and then went out to find her neighbors. They were all safe. But Jack Coon stayed in his hiding place for a long time before he was brave enough to come out.

REDDY FOX AND THE CATERPILLAR

Reddy Fox and the Caterpillar

REDDY FOX was walking through the woods one day. He was grinning to himself and thinking of the fine supper he would have that evening over by the pond where Mrs. Quack and her family had been spending a few days. All at once Reddy stopped short and stood very still. He wasn't listening, but there was something on a leaf in front of him, a very queer looking worm with hair all over its back. Now Reddy had often seen that kind of a worm before, but for the life of him he could not have told what it was. And on looking closer he saw that this woolly worm was devouring a leaf.

"What a queer looking thing you are," he said, but the worm kept right on eating.

Then Reddy looked up.

"My! my! if there isn't a tree almost stripped of its leaves. Too bad, for it was such a pretty tree."

Reddy couldn't help thinking about that strange, woolly worm as he passed on up the hill to wait for darkness so he could make that call on the Quack family.

Reddy was dozing or else thinking real hard when Mother Owl flew into the tree right over his head.

"Hello, Reddy! a fine evening it is," she said. Mother Owl knew right away why Reddy was there.

Reddy Fox felt so guilty that he could hardly say a word, and just then he thought about the woolly worm that he had seen eating the leaf. He didn't really care so much to know what the woolly worm was as he did to have Mother Owl tell a story. If she would only tell a story she might forget to ask where he was going and what he was waiting for. So Reddy Fox tried to appear as unconcerned as pos-

sible while he asked Mother Owl what a woolly worm was.

"A woolly worm?" exclaimed Mother Owl. "The idea, Reddy! What makes you ask such a question as that?"

Reddy Fox didn't dare laugh, for if he had Mother Owl would have known right off that he did not care to know what that worm was.

"Well, I saw one this afternoon," he answered, looking up at her, "and it was eating a tree." Reddy Fox felt foolish to be asking about woolly worms.

"Eating a tree? Oh, Reddy Fox, you are mistaken, this woolly worm was a caterpillar eating leaves. Hoo, hoo, hoo!" laughed Mother Owl. "I see I'll have to explain to you what a caterpillar is. A caterpillar will some day be a moth or butterfly, as the case may be."

"How funny!" exclaimed Reddy, showing his teeth.

"Not at all funny," she answered. "It is just one of the ways Grandmother Nature has of taking care

of her children. This woolly worm or caterpillar hatches from the egg in about a week or ten days after the egg was laid. A caterpillar is very greedy and as soon as hatched it begins to eat as fast as it can. It eats so much that it has to change its skin in a few days to grow larger. A great many caterpillars change

"REDDY FOX WAS THINKING"

their skins about five times. Think of it, Reddy, of anybody having to change their skin so they can get bigger."

Reddy Fox was thinking. It was one of the most wonderful things he had ever heard tell of.

"When the caterpillar has grown just a certain size

Grandmother Nature tells it to make a bed, and the caterpillar obeys her. It takes some silk out of its pocket and weaves a pretty bed with nice covers and then goes to bed all covered up. Just as soon as this caterpillar can change its skin once more it gets into a queer-looking shell or case and is then ready to get out of its bed of silk. No, you never could tell, Reddy Fox, that this strange little case had any life at all in it when you look at it.

"But things are not always as they look, Reddy Fox, and inside of that little shell or case this caterpillar is very busy putting on a pair of wings just as Grandmother Nature told it to do, so it will look just like its mother and father. In a short time, sometimes within a few weeks and sometimes not for several months afterwards, this shell begins to open. It cracks, and then what do you think? Why out comes a full grown butterfly or moth! Its wings are not very large at first, but in a few hours this young fellow's wings are all ready for flying. Strange, isn't it?"

Reddy Fox could hardly believe it. But Mother Owl kept on talking, and Reddy Fox was so interested that he did really forget that he had planned a trip to the pond that night. I think she did it on purpose, don't you?

Bunny Cottontail's Rattle-box

BUNNY COTTONTAIL was very, very young when he left home and ran to a thicket of shrubbery. It was one of the best places that any little rabbit ever saw for hiding, and Bunny felt as if he would like to make himself a "couch" and stay there a long time.

Things might have been different if Bunny had not heard a very peculiar noise like a rattle box close by. He thought it sounded very funny, and the idea of having a rattle box which sounded by itself every day was a thing that pleased Bunny very much. As Bunny was very timid and young he never tried to think what that strange rattling sound was. It was over to one

side of him about a yard away behind a small stump.

Soon Bunny thought he would go and find his brother Peter and have him come to hear his rattle box, as he called it. Bunny ran as fast as he could to the clover patch but Peter was not there. He went all over the woodland, but Peter could not be found, for he did not know that his brother was at that very minute helping himself to the good things in the farmer's truck patch.

You see the mothers of little rabbits do not teach them that they must not take things that do not belong to them. Peter Rabbit had never even heard that it is wrong to steal.

Bunny stopped under a tree to think. Oh, how he did wish his brother could hear his fine rattle box. And I do believe he would have gone to sleep right there if he had not heard a sound up in the tree.

"Oh, ho! Bunny Cottontail," said Mother Owl, for it was she, and she had been watching Bunny ever since he started out to find his brother. "I know who you are looking for. I am ashamed of your

brother to think where he is right this minute. What do you want to see him for?"

Now Bunny was so afraid at first that he had a mind to run away and hide, but he knew this was Mother Owl, for Peter had told him about her. Instead of

"OH YOU FOOLISH LITTLE RABBIT, DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR RATTLE-BOX IS?"

running away, then, Bunny sat down and told Mother Owl everything.

"Oh, you foolish little rabbit," said Mother Owl, "don't you know what your rattle box is? Well, it is a rattlesnake that lives in that patch of shrubbery. I

know him. He is a dangerous fellow to be with. The rattle box you heard was nothing but this rattlesnake's tail, which is made up of a number of loosely connected rings of a horny, bony material. It is sometimes said that the number of rattles on a rattlesnake's tail shows how old he is, but it is not true.

"The rattlesnake sheds his skin more than once a year, and every time he does so Grandmother Nature gives him another rattle to put on his tail. Nobody knows why he needs a rattle box like that, but he uses it for several things, and he can warn people to stay away from him. He seems to know that he is dangerous. Whenever we hear of a rattlesnake having eight or ten rattles it just shows that he has shed his skin that many times, and he might be either four or five years old with that many rattles."

Bunny Cottontail was shaking, for he began to think of that rattle box. After hearing what it was he did not wish to be near one again.

"Wait, Bunny," said Mother Owl, "and I will tell you a few more things about this rattlesnake. When

cold weather comes he goes to some place under the ground. Often he likes a big cave and goes there to spend the winter, and has company. Sometimes he goes into the home of the prairie dog and lives. One of my cousins often lives in a hole with a rattlesnake, but, oh, oh, I don't think I would like to do that. He is too ugly and such a bad fellow.

"Now, Bunny Cottontail," whispered Mother Owl, "you know as much about this rattlesnake as you need to know, and I would advise you to have nothing to do with him or his rattle box. You might find your brother Peter at the truck patch, but I wouldn't advise you to go there, either, for there is a hound who lives there. He might catch you, for he can run very swiftly, and he will catch your brother some of these days as sure as I am Mother Owl."

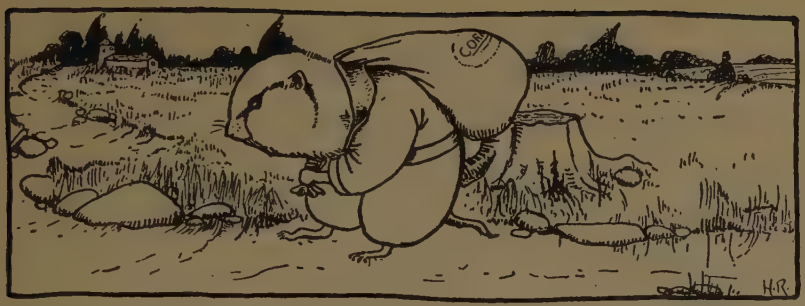
"Thank you, Mother Owl. I think I will go over to Peter Rabbit's favorite clover patch and wait." Bunny Cottontail went hopping away.

"Well, well," said Mother Owl to herself, "I am glad I had a chance to tell this little rabbit about the

old rattlesnake. Perhaps he will tell somebody else, too, so they can watch out for that rattle box in the shrubbery. And Bunny Cottontail will have to learn that things are not always as they seem."

"He and other little children must learn to take care of themselves, for not all things that are dangerous give warning before they strike.

"The rattlesnake is a very bad fellow, but he always gives one a chance to get out of his way."



Helping Danny Meadow Mouse

PETER RABBIT went liperty-lip, liperty-lip to the tree where Mother Owl lived, and you could see that he was almost ready to cry. He leaned against the tree and looked up to see if Mother Owl were there.

Mother Owl knew right away that Peter Rabbit had something to tell her when she looked out of her door and saw him coming.

"What is it, Peter Rabbit?" she asked, coming down a limb or two.

"Oh, Mother Owl, it is dreadful the way they are treating poor Danny Meadow Mouse." Then Peter broke down and cried so hard that Mother Owl had to wait until he sobered up. Peter loved Danny

Meadow Mouse, and anything that disturbed him was almost sure to affect Peter also.

"Something ought to be done about it," Peter went on, "and I came over to ask your advice. I have asked several, but none of them knows what can or ought to be done."

"Hoo, hoo!" said Mother Owl, "it is just as I thought, that somebody would be picking on Danny Meadow Mouse. Now, Peter Rabbit, tell me right off what the trouble is."

"They say Tommy Woodchuck has been stealing Danny's corn. Sometimes he goes right out and takes it no matter who is looking, and sometimes he hides when Danny is going by and then jumps out, knocks Danny over, and runs off with the corn."

"Well, Peter Rabbit," said Mother Owl, looking at Peter very closely, "you did not see this? Some one told you? It may not be true if somebody else said so."

"I think there is no doubt about it, Mother Owl. I once heard Danny crying myself, and just a while

ago I saw him running home as fast as he could. I asked him then what the trouble was, but all he could says was 'Tommy Woodchuck, Tommy Woodchuck!' "

"Then it must be true," Mother Owl answered. "I'll look into this, Peter Rabbit, and I'll see to it this evening."

Mother Owl went back to her house to get ready. Peter Rabbit ran all over the neighborhood telling his best friends that something was going to happen.

Just after sundown Mother Owl flew quietly over to a large bush close to the home of the Meadow Mouse family. It was not far from the home of the Woodchucks. She saw the road along which Danny Meadow Mouse had to go to his corn, and she found it was very lonely. After looking closely for several minutes she found the very spot where Tommy Woodchuck usually lay in wait for Danny. It was at a sharp turn of the road and Tommy Woodchuck had been hiding behind a big clod of dirt with weeds around it. Of course, when Danny Meadow Mouse went by with his sack of corn on his back Tommy

Woodchuck would always find it easy to run out and grab the corn. Besides, there was no other way that Danny could reach his corn except by going along this road, and it was either run the risk of being robbed or else starve.

"TOMMY WOODCHUCK HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF POOR DANNY"

Mother Owl had not long to wait before she saw Tommy Woodchuck sneaking along toward his hiding place to wait for Danny Meadow Mouse. "It is just as I had expected," she said to herself, "Tommy Woodchuck has the advantage of poor Danny."

It seemed a long time before the Meadow Mouse

put in an appearance. When he was first observed he was going very slowly and crying softly to himself. Then he would turn and scamper back home. Soon he would come out again, and the voice of Mrs. Meadow Mouse was heard telling him not to be afraid. At last he ran as fast as his legs could carry him past the place where Tommy was hiding, and Tommy seeing him go by knew that he would soon be back with his little sack of corn. Tommy lay closer to the ground and chuckled to himself.

It was so long before there were any signs of life round there after Danny Meadow Mouse had gone by that Mother Owl began to wonder if he had not gone home some other way. And nothing could be seen of Tommy Woodchuck, for he was lying so close to the ground. Very soon the voice of Danny Meadow Mouse was heard saying, "Oh, Tommy, please, please don't take my corn," and then he would run until he would fall with his sack.

Tommy Woodchuck was waiting, and so was Mother Owl. She was watching both Danny and

Tommy, but Tommy was looking only for that sack of corn. Poor Danny Meadow Mouse was shaking when he came to the place where he had been robbed so much, and when he got there, sure enough Tommy rushed out to grab the sack of corn. Mr. Meadow Mouse held on tightly to his sack and Tommy could not get hold of it as easily as he had imagined. So when Tommy found that he could not get the sack as quickly as he wished he struck poor Danny Meadow Mouse a hard blow on the head and knocked him over.

"Now I've got the corn," Tommy was saying, "and I'll hurry home and take my fill before bedtime."

"I think I'll take a hand in this," said Mother Owl. She swooped down upon Tommy so quickly that he dropped his corn and tried to escape, but he could not get away. She took hold of him and rose in the air.

"Now I'll teach you how to rob Danny Meadow Mouse," said Mother Owl on the way home with Tommy in her talons. Tommy knew what was coming and began to wiggle and squirm so much that she

"SHE TOOK HOLD OF HIM AND ROSE IN THE AIR"

could hardly hold him. In fact she soon found that he was slipping from her feet. She hurried to get

home before Tommy got away from her, but just as she was crossing the brook close to the tree where she lived Tommy fell from her talons into the water. Tommy got very wet, but he swam out as quickly as possible. Mother Owl was still hunting him. He ran under the roots of an old stump, and so was safe.

Mother Owl called after him. "Now, Tommy, if you will promise never to rob Danny Meadow Mouse again I'll let you go."

And from behind those stump roots she heard Tommy say, "Yes, Mother Owl, I'll never disturb him any more, but I'll get my living honestly."

Mother Owl went home feeling pleased, and Tommy, having lost some of his pretty fur where Mother Owl took hold of him, was a sadder but wiser Woodchuck after that.

Who Threw that Apple

"I'LL declare," said Mother Owl to her children after she came home, "I was greatly amused a while ago. Somebody threw an apple at Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk, or at least they thought somebody did.

"I had gone over to the old apple tree to look for a mouse. After looking round a while I flew very quietly to a high limb of the apple tree. The weeds were so thick that I did not think Peter and Jimmy were there at all, they were so quiet. Planning mischief, I suppose, and didn't want anybody to hear. I was in the act of scratching my head with my toe when, chump! down went an apple to the ground, and right away I heard the voices of Peter Rabbit and Jimmy

Skunk. That apple had fallen right on Peter and made him yell, and Jimmy began to offer sympathy.

"Then Peter Rabbit asked, 'Who threw that apple?' and Jimmy answered, 'I don't know, Peter. Too bad, did it hurt?'

"I just couldn't stand it a bit longer, and I almost fell off that limb, I was so amused. I had lots of fun joking Peter and Jimmy about somebody throwing that apple. Jimmy thought I had thrown it, but Peter believed some man did and wondered how it came to fall from the tree. Just then I saw the farmer coming out of his house with his gun, and I told Peter and Jimmy to come over here and I would tell them all about it. Well, dear me! if here don't come Peter and Jimmy now. They must have run every step of the way."

It was true they were coming at a swift pace up the woodland path, talking to each other and Peter looking very foolish over being hit by the apple. They were at the tree in no time at all, and Mother Owl came down to the lowest limb to meet them.

"Now, Peter Rabbit, you and Jimmy are here. Did you go to that tree to get into some mischief?" asked

"COMING AT A SWIFT PACE UP THE WOODLAND PATH"

Mother Owl, turning her head sideways and looking down at them.

Jimmy Skunk looked to the ground and couldn't say a word.

"No, Mother Owl, we didn't; did you?" asked Peter.

Mother Owl was not expecting to be asked such a question.

She said, "No, Peter, but I'll tell you some time why I was there."

"You promised to tell us who threw that apple," said Peter.

"Yes, I did," she began, "and I'll now explain to set your minds at rest. I didn't throw that apple and neither did anybody else. It fell off the limb when I was going to scratch my head."

"The idea!" exclaimed Peter. "Then you knocked it from the limb and it fell on my back?"

"Partly, Peter; but the apple fell because it was ready to fall. Now, listen. There was once a man by the name of Newton, who had an experience with an apple just like you had a while ago, Peter Rabbit. He saw one fall to the ground, or it fell on his head, I don't know which, and it set him to thinking. I can't imagine anybody could think much after being hit on

the head by a big apple falling from a tree. But Mr. Newton did. He sat right down and thought it over."

"Phew!" said Peter Rabbit, rubbing his sore back and neck, "I don't see how anybody could think."

Mother Owl had to turn her head away so she could close her eyes and laugh to herself.

"Yes, this man Newton sat right down and thought it over. He saw that everything fell toward the earth whenever it had the chance, and he wondered why. Then he discovered that some power or force made that apple fall, and the farther it had to drop the harder it would fall. Say that apple fell only two inches, it wouldn't strike hard. But if it fell from the top of the tree, it would be going rather fast by the time it reached the ground and so would strike harder. No wonder, Peter Rabbit, that apple hurt so when it struck your back, for it had to fall almost from the top of the tree."

Peter Rabbit opened his eyes very wide and stuck his ears up straight. "Then this man Newton makes the apples fall," he said.

Even Jimmy Skunk laughed, though he felt guilty to think he had gone to that tree for no good.

"No, no! Peter," answered Mother Owl, bending over so Peter could understand better. "It is Grandmother Nature who arranged that things should fall toward the earth. It is what is called attraction, for the earth draws things to it."

Peter Rabbit was beginning to understand, but he could hardly keep still. "Why don't you fall, Mother Owl, then when you are in the air?" he asked.

"Because I have wings to keep me up," she answered.

Peter Rabbit said "Oh," and went away liperty-lip, liperty-lip to ask Father Frog a few questions. Jimmy Skunk stole away to a hole nearby and did not come out again until he got over feeling so guilty.

What Happened to Tony Rat

TONY BARN RAT was always in trouble. Now this was not strange, for Tony had a great appetite and he liked to eat better than anything else in the world. Tony was so greedy that he took to stealing because he could not get enough to eat any other way, and, moreover, Tony never would work for his food and get it honestly.

The farmer set traps for Tony, sent the dogs after him, and put out poison, but Tony was always able to get away to his hole without ever being caught. How he did laugh to see how he fooled those who tried so hard to catch him.

One evening Tony Barn Rat went out hunting. He

had grown so tired of eating wheat and corn and things like that, and he wanted something different. He thought of the farmer's chicken coops where he remembered he had seen some pretty little yellow-legged chickens, and he started over there. Now that was very, very bad of Tony Barn Rat to think of taking away a pretty little chicken to eat, but Tony didn't care. He had to go round a big shed and past several small trees to the chicken coop. Just as he got under one of these trees he looked up and saw something sitting on a limb.

Now Tony Barn Rat likes to know what everything is, so he stopped and looked. He saw that it was a bird, but this bird had large eyes.

"Ho, it must be what they call a screech owl," he said.

"I am not a screech owl," answered the bird. "I am one of Mother Owl's babies. I'm insulted, and you'll have to pay for this, Tony Barn Rat, see if you don't."

The young owl flew away, and Tony went on looking for the chicken coop. The coop was securely

fastened, so Tony could never enter without gnawing in. He preferred to look for an easier way to get something to eat, and so went down to the straw lot where he had heard Bob White whistling one day. Perhaps Mrs. Bob White had a few eggs in her nest that he

"HE HAD HEARD BOB WHITE WHISTLING ONE DAY"

could get, and, oh! how Tony Barn Rat's mouth did water when he thought of eggs. There was nothing in the world he liked better.

Sure enough, Mrs. Bob White was on her nest, and Tony had not the least bit of trouble to find her.

Tony wondered how he could get Mrs. Bob White off her nest without making too much noise. He sniffed and sniffed and crept onward very cautiously. All at once he saw a dark shadow overhead. Then he felt a sharp pain in his back, and soon found himself being lifted up. It was Mother Owl who had been looking for him and had found him at last.

"Hoo, hoo! Tony Barn Rat, I'll teach you how to make fun of my children." Mother Owl was fast sailing away with Tony towards the woods. "What made you call my baby a screech owl? You good-for-nothing fellow, you will make a fine supper for my family."

Oh, how Tony's back did ache. He shut his eyes and tried to think. He wondered and wondered how he could get away. He kicked and squirmed, tried to bite Mother Owl, and things like that, but it did no good.

Mother Owl's nest was in a big tree close to the brook, and when she got there she saw her children waiting for her.

"Oh, if you haven't got Tony Barn Rat for us!" they cried, flapping their wings.

"Yes," answered their mother, "this is the fellow who called one of you a screech owl. Won't he make a nice supper?

"TONY HAD A HARD TIME TO FIND HIS WAY BACK HOME"

She had to push her children aside so she could find room to come up with Tony.

Here was Tony's last chance to escape, and he was watching. Just as soon as Mother Owl laid him down he gave a big jump out of the nest and landed in the

brook below. Poor Tony! He was almost drowned, but he didn't lose his head, and he swam out the best he could. He could hear those owls crying about losing such a fine supper, and he saw Mother Owl herself looking for him. He had barely time enough to reach the old stump where Tommy Woodchuck hid once after he was caught stealing Danny Meadow Mouse's corn.

Tony had a very hard time to find the way back home, but did find it at last after many strange adventures, and he never changed his ways a bit.

JACK COON GOES HUNTING

Jack Coon's Tail Rings

EVERYBODY in the forest had been talking about it. They could not imagine how it came that Jack Coon had rings on his tail. Some of these little people of the forest had never seen Jack Coon for he usually went out hunting at night when they were asleep. Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk both knew Jack well, for they sometimes went out together, but there were many others who did not know a thing about it. Jake Sparrow was so inquisitive once that he went to the home of Jack Coon and looked in the door of Jack's house to see if he could tell what Jack looked like. Jake had a narrow escape, for Jack jumped at him, and Jake lost several feathers.

Things went on this way until Mother Earth was really vexed with her children, and she threatened to punish them if they did not keep quiet about Jack Coon's tail rings.

Peter Rabbit became alarmed and told everybody they might find out if they would ask Mother Owl. She was the only one who knew and would probably tell if some one would ask her. So Jake Sparrow was sent to find out.

Mother Owl was at home, but she was busy making plans for her own work, and she did not hear the light tap at her door until one of her babies called her attention to it.

"Why, it's Jake Sparrow," she exclaimed when she looked out. "How do you do, Jake? Come right in."

But Jake would not go in. He wished Mother Owl would come out on her doorstep for a few minutes as he had something very important to ask her.

"Dear me," said Mother Owl, "I might have known better than to ask a little bird to come into my house. Now, what is it, Jake?"

"Oh, Mother Owl," Jake began, "they have sent me here to ask you why Jack Coon has rings on his tail?"

"PETER RABBIT BECAME ALARMED"

"Hoo, hoo!" laughed Mother Owl, "are you really meddling with Jack's business?"

"Oh, dear, no!" cried Jake. He was afraid to show where Jack had pulled out several feathers the time he went to look in. Jake felt as if Mother Owl knew all about it, and it made him feel foolish.

"Well," said Mother Owl, opening her eyes very wide, "long, long ago, when Mother Earth found she had so many children that she could not give them everything they wanted as soon as they wished, she had to call on Grandmother Nature to help her. There was no end of things to be done. All her children wanted houses to live in, and she got them nice places just as soon as she could and gave them fine clothes. But Jack Coon was not satisfied.

"Jack went round complaining about what he had to eat and said he looked like Old Mr. Bear's little brother. Now Mr. Bear was so big and Jack so much smaller that it was not at all pleasant to be considered a brother to Mr. Bear. It was just like being called a dwarf of the family.

"Jack worried more and more about it each day, and he began to steal. He would steal anything he could get his hands on, robbing birds' nests, and things like that. Jack does many other things, too, that it would not be pleasant to tell about. Well, Jack continued to complain so much about looking like a dwarf

brother of Mr. Bear's and about how common his clothes looked that Mother Earth finally turned the matter over to her Grandmother.

"Grandmother Nature knew right away what to do, for she knew Jack's wishes a great deal better than Mother Earth did. She saw that Jack was growing worse and worse in his habits and that something would have to be done very soon about it. After talking to Jack a while he told her he would do whatever she asked him to do if she would only make his clothes more beautiful. He didn't want to be continually taken for a brother of Mr. Bear's, and especially being called a dwarf bear. I don't blame him a bit."

Jake Sparrow was so interested in what Mother Owl had been telling that he almost fell off the doorstep of Mother Owl's house.

"Watch out, Jake Sparrow," warned Mother Owl. "You did not think old Grandmother Nature cared so much for her folks, did you?"

"Indeed, I never thought of it," answered Jake.

"Well," Mother Owl went on, "Grandmother Nature told Jack that she would make him forever different. She would make him so he would not resemble Mr. Bear so much, and that ought to be

"TOLD HIM TO STAY AT HOME THROUGH THE DAY TIME"

enough to ask for. Jack agreed to this, and Grandmother Nature put several rings on his tail and told him to wear them in remembrance of her. He was pretty well satisfied with this, but still complained

about being seen by other folks with those rings on his tail.

"Grandmother Nature then told him to stay at home through the daytime and go out only of a night. This pleased Jack so much that he thanked her over and over for her splendid advice. Sometimes he goes out on cloudy days, but he likes to hide in a hollow limb away up in some tree until it grows dark."

"Oh, yes," Jake spoke up, "I know where he stays." Then he felt so foolish when he recollected how he lost his feathers that he told Mother Owl it was time for him to go.

Mother Owl looked after Jake as he flew away to tell about Jack Coon's rings. "That little bird would not believe that I know why he is so inquisitive, but I do," she said.

When Billy Possum Fainted

PERHAPS if Billy 'Possum had not accepted the invitation to go along with Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk he would not have had to faint. Billy has those spells, though, and they come on when he gets badly scared.

Once upon a time Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk planned a trip, just Peter and Jimmy. No one was to know a thing about it, not even Mother Owl, who knew nearly everything that ever happened anyway. Jimmy had promised not to tell, but Peter got to thinking about it and he decided that he might tell Billy 'Possum, and if Billy desired to go, too, why it would be all right. So Peter told Billy, and then Mother Owl heard of it. Not another soul knew.

Now Mother Owl decided it would be best for her to watch and see what these three were up to. Moreover, when Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk got their heads together they seldom if ever changed their minds, and besides she could not even guess what this trip was that Peter and Jimmy had planned. It might be something that she ought to know about.

She flew over to the small oak tree where Peter and Jimmy were to meet for the trip and hid herself under th thick leaves. Jimmy Skunk came first, and then Billy 'Possum.

"I heard you were going on a trip," said Billy, coming right up beside Jimmy, who was waiting for Peter, "and I thought I would go along, too. Peter invited me."

Jimmy Skunk was very much surprised. "The idea!" he said, very crossly. "What made Peter tell?"

Mother Owl, sitting very still among those oak leaves, knew that Peter Rabbit couldn't keep a secret.

"I have a right to go if I wish," said Billy as he looked Jimmy straight in the eyes and frowned a little.

Then Jimmy and Billy sat down together and tried to make the best of it. Soon Peter Rabbit came.

"Now we are ready, I hope," whispered Jimmy. He got up and went round by the side of Peter, and so all three trotted away for the trip.

After they had got well out of sight Mother Owl flew from the oak tree and followed. "It is just as I had expected," she said to herself. "They are making for the farmer's truck patch. I'll go to the old cherry tree as quickly as possible and see what they do. Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk are enough to get into plenty of trouble without having Billy 'Possum for company."

Peter Rabbit was so busy telling about that truck patch that they were there in no time at all. He had been there once before, and, oh! such fine things he had found to eat. There were cabbages and lettuce for himself and lots and lots of good things for both Jimmy and Billy. That was one reason why he felt that he ought to invite Billy to go, too. It would have been selfish to have taken no one else but Jimmy.

Peter knew right where to go in. It was at a hole

where a picket had been broken. He went through at a jump, followed closely by the other two. Now, instead of sitting down to eat the good things at hand, Peter Rabbit began to run all over the truck patch,

"PETER RABBIT WAS BUSY TELLING ABOUT THE TRUCK PATCH"

because he wished his friends to know that he was well acquainted there.

"Do be careful, Peter," warned Jimmy Skunk. "Be sure you don't get us into trouble. Is there a dog around?"

"Mercy, yes!" Peter stopped short in his tracks. "I

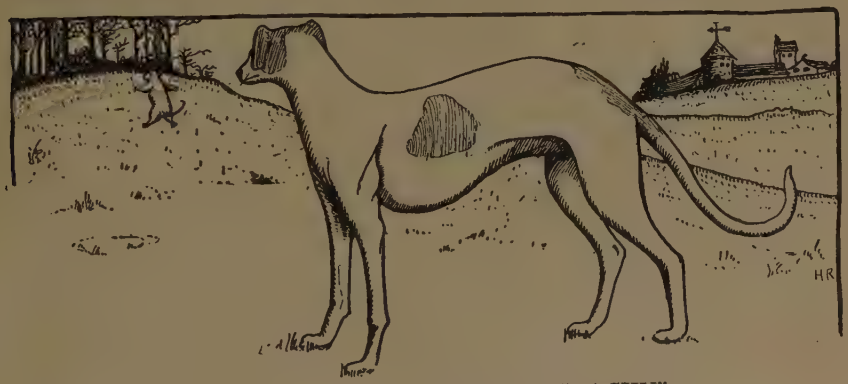
had almost forgotten about that hound. His name is Cracky. And run? Oh, say, Jimmy Skunk and Billy 'Possum, that dog nearly caught me once. He gave me a hard race. I never will forget it."

This made the cold chills run down both Jimmy's and Billy's backs. Peter acted like he was sorry he had come. To remember that dog made him feel that he would much rather be at home. Jimmy Skunk went over to one corner and a hen began to cackle. Peter Rabbit sat very still and looked around, but Billy 'Possum was not there. Suddenly an awful sound was heard.

"Bow-wow-wow-wow-wow-wow!" It was that hound coming and looking for a place to jump the fence. Peter Rabbit made two leaps for the hole in the broken picket, and then out came Jimmy Skunk. Both of them went across the fields home, forgetting all about poor Billy 'Possum. Where was he?

"Bow - wow - wow - wow!" Cracky had already jumped the fence and was tracking Peter Rabbit and Jimmy Skunk. He was not far from the hole in the

broken picket when Billy 'Possum was just going through. Poor Billy! It was too late for him to get far. Cracky went right through that hole after Billy, and then Billy fainted. Yes, he just fell right over like he was dead. Cracky came up and smelt of Billy and wondered what he should do with him.



"MERCY, YES, HIS NAME IS CRACKY"

"I think," said Cracky, "that this 'possum will make a fine dinner for somebody, so I'll just carry him over to my house. I never did taste of 'possum meat in my life, but I think I'll have a taste of this fine, fat fellow."

Cracky picked up Billy and started for the house with him. Just then there was a great flutter of hens

from a tree in the garden. Cracky dropped Billy and ran to see what the trouble was, but it was nothing except an old hen who was so scared that she flew over and pushed several others off the roost.

When Cracky came back to get Billy he saw something flying away to the woods, and Billy was gone, too. Mother Owl had gone home, and Billy was only pretending that he was dead. How disappointed Cracky was! He looked round in the weeds for Billy 'Possum, but couldn't find him. He never could understand where that 'possum went. But Billy knew that it had been a narrow escape for him, and he never could have been saved except by fainting.

Why Jack Snipe's Bill is so Long

"LONG, long ago," said Mother Owl to her babies, "when Mother Earth and Grandmother Nature were very busy giving their children everything they had asked for, Jack Snipe became very much dissatisfied with the short bill he had. It was discovered that Jack's legs had been made too long, very much too long, to look well with so short a bill.

"Of course, Jack was the one to be asked about what he desired, for Grandmother Nature never gives her children anything that would not be good for them. She knew what kind of bill would suit Jack the best of all, but that wasn't the way she wished to do things. It was a great consolation to her to know that Jack

would some time want the very bill she desired him to have.

"So they had a talk with Jack Snipe. 'Now, Jack,' said Grandmother Nature, 'you wish a different bill, and I am ready to give you what you desire, but first you must tell me why you wish to change. And be careful, Jack, when you choose, and don't select one that will not go well with your legs.'

"Jack Snipe looked at his legs a long time and thought it over. He knew he would much rather live around ponds and marshes than anywhere else, and that he liked tadpoles, worms and things of that sort the best of all. And it was so hard to find the good things to eat all on account of having so short a bill. A short bill would do very well for singing sweet songs like a canary, but Jack wasn't that way. He knew he never would sing much; in fact, he had no desire to sing sweetly and so would never have need of a pretty little bill. He wished one that was rather long so he could get around in the mud with it without being compelled to put his head under water too often.

"Grandmother Nature said she would give Jack enough time to make up his mind, and Mother Earth

"SUCH A BILL WOULD ENABLE HIM TO GO DEEP IN THE MUD"

was in no hurry. Both desired that their children be happy and satisfied.

"Finally the day came that Jack Snipe told Grandmother Nature just what he wished. He wanted a long, narrow bill of the same shape and the color of

his legs. Such a bill would enable him to go as deep into the mud as he cared to go and would be plenty long for shallow water, too. Then there was something else. Jack had found that it was very difficult to know what a thing was when he found it under the mud. If he could only see under the mud it would have been different; but he couldn't, so he had to ask his grandmother about it. He told her that if she could change this he would be very happy.

"Grandmother Nature had an idea, and it was the very best she could do. She fixed up a bill with the tip arranged so that he could tell immediately what everything was under the mud the very instant he felt it with his bill. In this way it would save Jack much trouble about jerking out things he could not eat. Jack tried his new bill and found it to be just what he had been looking for so long. I suppose he was the proudest and happiest bird in the world. He has a very queer little song and a strange way of ducking his head when he walks; but I think it is one of Jack's ways of thanking both Mother Earth and Grand-

mother Nature for all the blessings they have sent him."

Mother Owl had finished her story, but her babies were asleep. They were nearly ready to fly away, and they were dreaming about that.

Bunny Cottontail and the Bumble Bee

BUNNY COTTONTAIL, Peter Rabbit's brother, couldn't help it because he was stung by that bumble bee. A dog had been chasing him, and he ran into a briar patch and stopped, because he heard strange sounds ahead of him and that dog was behind tracking. That was why Bunny got stung, for he had stopped right by a bumble bee's nest and was too busy just then wondering which way he should go. He dashed off to one side to get away from that bee and ran as fast as he could toward the wood. He had to

run the risk either of being stung several more times or of giving that dog the chase of his life.

That dog was found to be a very slow runner, and Bunny had to laugh as he glanced over his shoulder to see how far that dog was being left behind. But Bunny's back was sore when he stopped under the oak tree where the little woods people often met.

"Oh, my back!" he whined as he sat down to think. "I can't see what good bumble bees are. If they couldn't sting I would like them very well."

Mother Owl was sitting in that very tree among the leaves watching Bunny. "So you don't think bumble bees are good for anything? Well, Bunny, you are mistaken. Listen."

Bunny Cottontail could hardly believe that bumble bees are good for a single thing on earth except to sting people, but he felt sure Mother Owl could tell him if they were.

"Now listen, Bunny," Mother Owl said once more as she came nearer the ground, "bumble bees are very useful. Just think of how much bumble bees do

for the fields of clover as well as many other flowers. Did you ever hear of pollen?"

Bunny Cottontail had never in his whole life ever

"JUST THINK HOW MUCH BUMBLE BEES DO FOR A FIELD OF CLOVER"

heard of such a word, but he tried to pretend that he knew.

"Well," continued Mother Owl, "pollen is the fine dust that you see in the center of a flower. Some of this fine yellow dust placed in another flower of the same kind will make that flower produce fruit. It all

comes about because Grandmother Nature and Mother Earth said they would help each other in getting everything ready for growing and bearing fruit. Mother Earth was to furnish the food and hold the plant while Grandmother Nature was to do the feeding and help the plant to make pretty flowers for Mother Earth's dress.

"So the flowers bloom and Grandmother Nature shows them how to get ready to bring forth fruit and seed. She knew that some of the flowers would not care very much whether they created seed or not, and in order to encourage them she told the bumble bees to get ready to visit the flowers. The bumble bees could hardly understand what Grandmother Nature wanted them to do this for until they found they could get some very fine honey from the flowers for their trouble. Then it was the easiest thing in the world for the bees to do, for everybody likes honey, as every little boy or girl knows.

"Well, the flowers told Grandmother Nature that they would trade their honey to the bees, but they were

tired of giving it all away. I can't blame them. It would be ever so much nicer to trade for something. Grandmother Nature knew there was one thing the flowers would be glad to get and that was pollen. Sure enough it was. She told the bees. The bees said

"OLD MR. BUMBLE BEE OFTEN SAYS HE CAN'T HELP GETTING POLLEN ALL OVER HIMSELF"

the flowers were always looking at each other and admiring each other's pollen, and so here was the grandmother's chance to do what she hoped to do. She would have the bumble bees carry pollen on their wings and legs when they went to the flowers. Now

the bumble bee exchanges pollen among the flowers and they give him honey for his trouble. Old Mr. Bumble Bee often says he can't help getting pollen all over himself when he goes to the flowers on account of the narrow spaces in which he has to go down for the honey in the flower cup.

"He has told the flowers about it, but they only smile and smile, and he knows they never will change. I suppose they are satisfied with the way bumble bee trades."

Mother Owl was looking at a bright little flower right by the side of Bunny Cottontail. Bunny couldn't see it for he was thinking of his sore back.

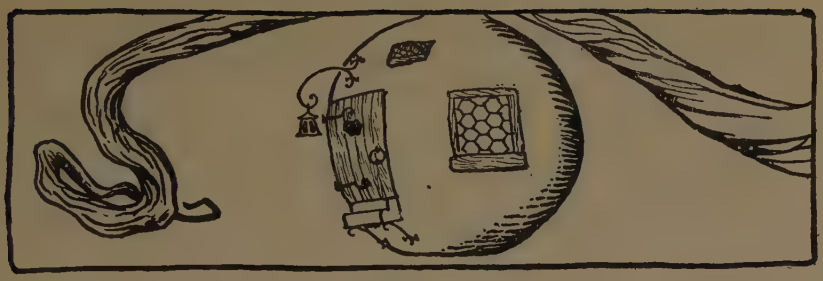
"Never mind the sore back, Bunny," she said. "You ought to be thankful it was a sore back instead of having the dog tear you to pieces."

"No, no, Mother Owl, that dog couldn't catch anything. He is such a slow fellow."

"Remember, Bunny, that a bumble bee can sting so he can defend himself and his home. But suppose that dog had stepped into that bumble bee's nest, do

you suppose it would have made him run faster?" asked Mother Owl.

But Bunny actually grinned a little and didn't answer. He ran away to the clover patch.



A Visit to the Home of the Wasp

"WELL, Johnny Blue Jay," asked Mother Owl, "what strange things have you seen on your travels this afternoon?"

Johnny Blue Jay had been acting as if he had seen something he couldn't explain. He was just getting ready for bed, and he didn't really care to talk. But Johnny wiped his bill on a limb and looked up at Mother Owl, who was patiently waiting to hear what he was going to say.

"Yes, Mother Owl, I was trying to see what Mrs. Wasp's home looked like, but she drove me away and called me saucy and impudent. I saw a part of it, though. Do you know what it is?"

"Indeed I do," she replied with a wink of her eyes. "I know the Wasp family very well. But, goodness,

Johnny Blue Jay, it would take a long, long time to tell about them."

Old Dame Blue Jay was anxious for her husband to come home, and Johnny knew it, but he said, "Well, tell me about Mrs. Wasp and her home, and then I must be hurrying home or my wife will lock the door."

"Now listen closely, Johnny. Mrs. Wasp has a rather hard time of it. She has to build her own nest, feed her babies, and then, when autumn comes, she has to find a place to spend the winter. When she wakes up in the spring she knows she has a great amount of work ahead of her. She has been spending the winter under some rock or in the crevice of a tree or in some other place like that. When she comes out she hunts for a good place to make her home. Having found it she then goes to find some old wood and gnaws it off piece by piece, and chews up these little pieces until they are a pulpy mass. First, she make a tiny stem by which to hang the nest and then builds about three cells, and by the time it is done it is in shape something like a goblet turned upside down and

like gray paper in color and weight. It is all made from the wood pulp which she chews up so finely.

"It is in the same way that men make paper, Johnny. Only they do not chew up the wood as the wasps do.

"SHE HAS TO FIND A PLACE TO SPEND THE WINTERS"

They have large machines that grind it up. They do not have to get tiny little scraps of wood either, but instead they cut down great forest trees and float them down rivers to the mills that grind them up.

"But, Johnny, I do believe he got the whole idea of paper making by watching Mrs. Wasp build her home. I was so interested in paper that I almost forgot that I had not finished telling you about Mrs. Wasp."

"She lays an egg in each cell and then closes them. While waiting for these eggs to hatch she continues to enlarge her house by adding more cells and laying more eggs. As soon as the first babies are hatched she must begin feeding them, and they require a great amount of food. She chews the food up well before they are allowed to have it, and sometimes it is small insects and sometimes honey. They continue to eat for about a month and then weave a silken covering for themselves, staying in it for ten days.

"You see, Johnny, they go to bed, tucked up warm and nice, so that their wings and legs shall have time to grow. So Mrs. Wasp does not have to bother taking care of her babies while she is so busy building her house and laying eggs.

"I think she would have a very hard time taking care of so many babies when she is so busy. So I think

she is a very wise mother to put them to bed, don't you?

"The first wasps that are hatched in a nest are called 'neuters' or workers, and when they have left the cells they are ready to go to work feeding the other babies and helping their mother build the house larger. All the empty cells that have held young wasps are cleaned out and then the mother lays another egg in each one. Wasps like fruit and do a great deal of damage by sucking the juices."

Johnny Blue Jay looked down, for he felt guilty, as he remembered that he had once been caught stealing cherries from the farmer.

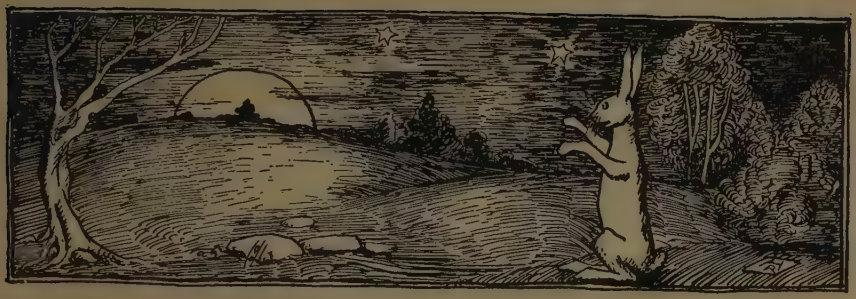
"I think," he said as quickly as he could so Mother Owl wouldn't notice his embarrassment, "that I have seen a wasp who builds her nest from mud, haven't I?"

"Indeed you have," answered Mother Owl. "Some people call them 'mud-daubers.' They build their cells from mud and lay eggs in them. Then they catch a caterpillar and kill it and put it into the cell. The cell is then closed with mud. When the egg hatches

the young wasp feeds on the caterpillar until it hears Grandmother Nature tell it to get its wings and legs ready for going out into the world."

Johnny Blue Jay was nodding. When Mother Owl had finished he raised the feathers on his head, shook himself several times and flew away home to be scolded by his wife for being so late. But he thought it was worth a scolding to have learned all of these wonderful things about wasps and their homes, but he thought he would not tell Mrs. Blue Jay until next morning, because he knew she was tired and sleepy.

PETER RABBIT AND THE MOON



Peter Rabbit and the Moon

IT WAS the first time that Peter Rabbit had ever seen the moon. Now that was funny, but there were a number of things that came about to make it almost impossible for Peter to take notice of things as he had intended. By the time Peter had opened his little eyes after he was born, great banks of clouds had covered the sky and hid the moon. Then Peter and one of his brothers were chased by a hound and compelled to run to a cave and hide. They were very badly frightened, and they did not leave that cave for several days, for the hound was watching, or at least they thought he was. It was very hard to get away from that hound.

At last Peter and his brother did escape from the cave and roamed over the fields of clover, nibbling the sweet green leaves. Then they lingered that evening at an old farm gate, watching the eastern sky. It was growing very light, and as they watched, the moon, big and full, came up.

Peter wondered what it could be, but he saw no one nearby who could tell him what it was. He was really afraid, for he had never heard about such things before. To make matters worse he ran off and left his brother and hid under a big bush over near the forest.

"I can't imagine what in the world it can be," he said to himself. "I'm sure it can't be the sun."

"Hoo, hoo!" laughed Mother Owl, who was sitting in that big bush waiting for her supper. "Now, Peter Rabbit, what is it?"

Peter Rabbit was almost ready to run away again, when it came into his head that Mother Owl could tell him what he desired to know.

"Oh, Mother Owl, why does the sun shine at night?"

"Yes Peter That is The Moon"

asked Peter, sticking his head out to look at the moon, which was rising higher and higher.

Mother Owl knew that Peter was very young, but she could not understand why he had never seen the moon. Then Peter told her all about it, how the sky had been covered with thick clouds and how he had been compelled to hide in a cave from the hound.

"Yes, Peter, that is the moon," Mother Owl answered. "It gives light to the world at night. Now listen, Peter Rabbit, very closely and I will tell you a few things about this moon. Of course, you may hear some one say that it is made of green cheese, but it is not. This moon is hard like the ground. When Mother Earth

was born she was sent on a long, long journey around the sun. When anybody goes on a long journey they like to have company, and so it was with Mother Earth. She felt it would be very lonely to go around and around the sun without a companion, and so she asked Grandmother Nature.

"Grandmother Nature always knows just what to do, and she always pleases us when she does something. Well, she thought she would make the moon for Mother Earth's friend and companion. Soon the moon was ready for the trips and Grandmother Nature put her out in the sky about 239,000 miles so Mother Earth could have plenty of room.

"There was something else that Mother Earth desired, but she didn't know what to do about it, and that was how she was going to carry this big moon, who is about 2,100 miles thick, along in her satchel. Mother Earth herself is very heavy and she knew that she would have all she could do to fly along through the pretty blue skies and take care of her own self. The sun was going to give her plenty of light and heat

and make the trips as pleasant as possible for her. Then Grandmother Nature made a suggestion. She would give this moon power to go by itself and still it would never leave Mother Earth."

"Oh, oh, how funny!" cried Peter Rabbit, as he sat up very straight, stuck his ears forward and looked through the leaves at the moon.

"Please don't interrupt me, Peter," cautioned Mother Owl. She knew Peter was very uneasy.

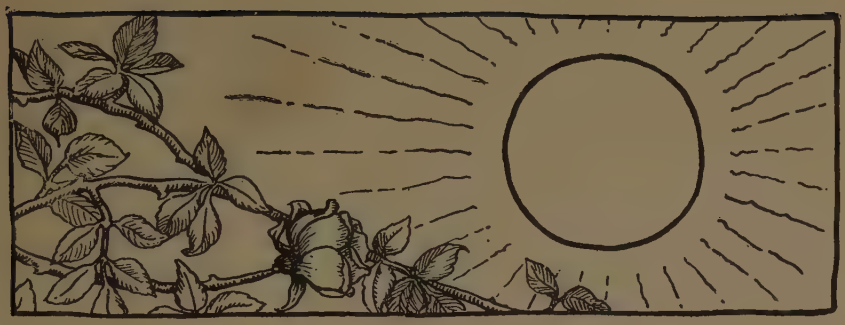
"After the moon had power to go by itself along the side of Mother Earth, it was again discovered that it would be nice to have a change once in a while. Mother Earth again asked her grandmother to help her. This time they would have the moon travel sometimes on one side and then on the other, sometimes behind and sometimes ahead. This was all very well, for undoubtedly Mother Earth would get tired of having her companion on just one side of her all the time. Grandmother Nature agreed to it and makes the moon go around Mother Earth in a circle once every month. Now there is something very queer about all this.

While the moon is going around Mother Earth it keeps its face toward her and never turns it away. And I don't suppose it ever will."

Mother Owl rolled her eyes up toward the moon, but said nothing more for several minutes. Peter Rabbit was hopping all around, just as if he would like to ask about something more.

"I'll tell you some time, Peter, about the sun and stars if I have the time and you can keep still long enough."

But Peter Rabbit just dropped his ears flat on his neck and went very, very swiftly across the fields to look for his brother and tell him what he had heard. And Mother Owl, left alone, went home without her supper.



What makes the leaves green

PETER RABBIT and Jimmy Skunk had argued the whole day long. Peter had said the leaves were green because they tasted better than yellow ones. Jimmy didn't eat leaves when he could find something else, but he felt sure he would like them just as well if they were some other color. Peter liked leaves and could often make a meal of them when they were nice and green, but he never could enjoy eating a brown one. Now Jimmy was fond of brown leaves because they made a good warm bed. Peter and Jimmy said many foolish things that day about green leaves, because they did not understand why the leaves were green.

Finally, Mother Owl heard of it. She was just going by looking for her supper when she spied Peter and Jimmy and heard what they were saying.

"Why do you foolish children bother your heads about why the leaves are green," she said so suddenly that Peter dodged under a bush because he was afraid. "No use to run, Peter, I won't harm you. Come out and I'll tell you and Jimmy why the leaves are green."

Peter and Jimmy were very anxious to have their dispute settled, and they knew that Mother Owl could tell if any one could.

"When Mother Earth was very young," Mother Owl began, "she could hardly decide just what color she wished to have her dresses. She was as particular then as anybody is nowadays about the same thing. She was very much taken back when some one told her that it would not do to have her dress mostly red or a bright yellow for they would make her look so old. Mother Earth didn't know what to do. She asked several of her neighbors, but there was only one who would agree to help her in getting out the best colors,

and that was Mr. Sun. He had been giving her light and keeping her warm ever since she was born, and she felt that she ought to listen to what he said about this.

"Mr. Sun said that green would make her look young, and that was what Mother Earth desired. You know nobody likes to look old. He told her that she could put different shades here and there on her dress, such as red roses, pink flushes, blue seas, and golden leaves, for the sake of a change. Green was the very best of all for spring and summer. It would be nice to have browns and yellows for autumn, and, moreover, this green dress could be dyed to many beautiful shades. Mother Earth was delighted and finally agreed to this. She was to furnish the materials and Mr. Sun was to mix the colors. When she put the materials together Mr. Sun turned his light on it, and so they have the color of green.

"Then, when she grows tired of green, the Sun helps her to get the beautiful colors of autumn. He makes the weather cooler so it will dye the green dress.

MOTHER OWL TELLS PETER RABBIT AND JIMMY SKUNK
WHY THE LEAVES ARE GREEN

First, it changes from green to golden and scarlet and then comes the brown shade for winter. She wears these shades for a time when Mr. Sun helps her once more to get the nice green dress which she likes the best of all. The leaves with which Mother Earth makes her dress have a peculiar kind of juice in them which the light from the Sun turns to the green shades. This peculiar coloring matter is called chlorophyll."

Mother Owl had finished and she waited to see whether Peter and Jimmy were convinced. But they sat staring at each other with very queer looks on their faces.

"What's the matter with you two children? Don't you think I am telling you the truth?" asked Mother Owl.

But Peter and Jimmy continued to stare at each other for about five minutes, and then they laughed.

"Now that's funny," said Peter at last, "here I have been eating pieces of Mother Earth's dress all my life and didn't know it. They were just splendid, though, I am sure."

"And I have been thinking," said Jimmy Skunk, "that I have been using remnants of her dress to make my beds."

"Then you are both satisfied," said Mother Owl, "or you ought to be if you are not."

But Peter turned and went liperty-lip, liperty-lip to look for his favorite patch of clover, and Jimmy rushed off home to tell his folks about the things he had heard.

The Drummer of the Woodlands

"THUMP—thump—thump—thump — thump; thump-rup-rup-rup-rup-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!"

"What in the wide world is that?" There were several who asked that question.

Reddy Fox and Jack Coon, who heard them ask, smiled and turned their heads away, for they knew all about that sound, and Reddy was going to sneak over to where that drumming was going on. But he wanted to wait until no one was looking.

Thump—thump—thump—thump; rup r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

The Rabbits had an idea they had better hide, and it was the first time Bunny had ever heard that sound.

"Keep quiet," said Chipmunk, who was listening;

but for the life of him he could not have told what it was, for he had forgotten.

Jimmy Skunk came up, but Reddy Fox made an excuse to go because he said his wife was waiting for that piece of meat he had promised to bring home for supper.

Still the strange sound continued at intervals. Mother Owl came out of her house and sat up very straight. She knew.

"It is the first time I've heard one round here for some time," she said to Chipmunk.

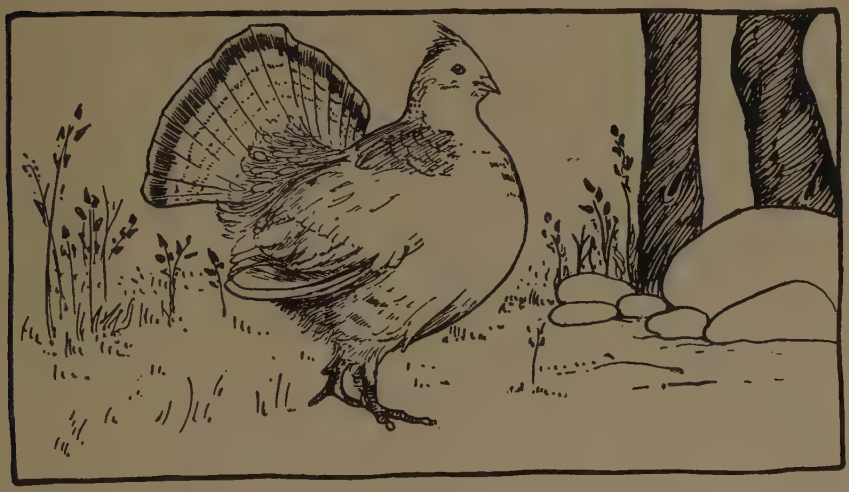
"First what?" inquired Bunny Cottontail, who was very anxious to know what that sound was.

"Why, that is the drummer of the woodland," answered Mother Owl. "The farmer calls it a pheasant or ruffed grouse. It is called Ruffed Grouse because it wears a big feather bow or 'ruff' around its neck. Did you ever see a hen with a top-knot? Well, the Ruffed Grouse looks something like that hen, except that the bunches of feathers are around its neck. It is Mr. Grouse that wears the largest ruff or feather

boa. His wife's is smaller and sometimes she has none at all.

"It is Mr. Grouse who does this drumming and—"

Thump—thump—thump—thump—rup!



"THE FARMER CALLS IT A PHEASANT OR RUFFED GROUSE"

"Don't run over there Peter Rabbit, you and Bunny, for I am sure Reddy Fox is sneaking round this very minute to catch Mr. Grouse," said Mother Owl. "Yes, Mr. Grouse is calling his future wife, and this drumming is his love song. Isn't that strange? The only

kind of song I ever sing is 'Hoo-hoo, hoo,' and I've sung my children to sleep many a time with that. Now Mr. Grouse produces this sound, some say, by beating the air with his wings while he stands and holds very tightly to some perch.

"Others say that he does it by striking his wings against his body. Or it may be that he strikes them against the perch on which he stands. He moves his wings very slowly at first and increases the speed until you can hardly see his wings at all. What strange drumming! It is nothing like what men use in brass bands. I heard a brass band once and it frightened me almost to death. I never was so glad in my life to get back to this old tree."

Mother Owl just then saw something stealing through the weeds toward the place where Mr. Grouse was drumming.

"Oh, there goes Reddy Fox, but he will be disappointed, for Mr. Grouse just now flew up into a tree. Mrs. Grouse, while sitting on her eggs, looks so much like the grass and bushes in color that it is often diffi-

cult to know where she is. When she goes out hunting with her babies she has a very peculiar way of acting, as if she was crippled. If anybody comes round where she and her babies are, she gives a warning and the babies hide. Then she will pretend that she is crippled, so you will leave her babies and follow her. The more you follow her the better pleased she is, for she knows that so long as you follow her you are going farther and father from her babies. When she thinks you have followed her far enough she flies up and sails away out of sight, and her babies are so well hidden that it is very hard to find them. They keep very still until they again hear her voice. My, my, but she is a good mother to those little dears, and she gets them everything good to eat."

Jimmy Skunk and Jack Coon began to laugh.

"Are you making fun of me?" asked Mother Owl.

But Mother Owl was left alone. Jack and Jimmy said they had important business to attend to. The Rabbits were so nervous that they ran races to the clover patch, and from there it was plain to be seen

that they would go to the truck patch. All the others had gone, too.

"If anybody ever mocks me," Mother Owl said, closing her eyes very slowly, "I would be inclined to treat them as I did the mocking-bird who tried to sing just like I do. That mocking-bird was making fun of me, so I drove him out of the woods. I'll have to tell about that some day. And I'll catch that Skunk and Coon some time and teach them a few lessons. Skunks and Coons must learn how to behave in company. It makes me think of how Reddy Fox was meddling with Mr. Grouse's business a while ago."

Mother Earth's White Dress

MOTHER OWL had just awakened from a nap. She had heard an awful sound, the firing of guns and the barking of dogs. At first she couldn't understand what was the matter, for such noises had seldom been heard in that woodland. She looked out of her door to see if she could see those hunters and whom they were hunting.

"I'll bet poor Peter Rabbit or his Brother Bunny will suffer for this," she said to herself as she looked at the trees which were covered with beautiful snow. "Snow is just what suits those rabbits, and I'm afraid they will be very careless how they make tracks so those hunters can track them."

Mother Owl was thinking she would much rather

take another nap when she saw something coming toward her tree. It was Peter Rabbit and close behind was his brother, Bunny Cottontail. Her tree was hollow almost to the top with a nice opening at the bottom, and she hoped they would come in. Her heart almost failed her when she saw Cracky, the farmer's hound, not far behind. My, my, how that hound could run! He was giving those rabbits the chase of their lives. Sure enough they did go into the hole at the foot of the tree, and then she knew that they were safe if they would climb.

She could hear Peter call his brother and tell him to hurry up that tree. Bunny, poor little fellow, was climbing as fast as he could, for it was the first time in his life that he had ever climbed up the inside of a tree. How that hound did howl and bark! He knew his quarry had escaped, but he wanted his master to come and see.

"Come up here," said Mother Owl. She could hear the rabbits coming nearer and nearer.

"Well, if here isn't Mother Owl, Bunny," ex-

claimed Peter, all out of breath. "I do hope we are safe here."

"Don't worry, dears," she answered, "this tree is too large to be cut down just for two rabbits."

"Oh, if it wasn't for that snow," whined Bunny, "we might not have been chased."

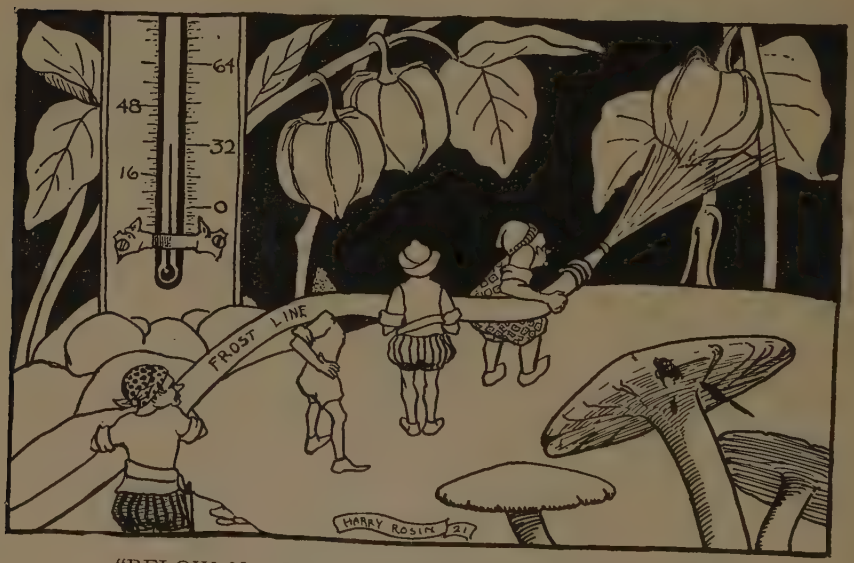
Just then voices were heard at the foot of the tree. The hunters had come up. They saw where the rabbits had entered that hole and they knew the tree was too large to climb. "It's no use," one of them said, "those rabbits are beyond our reach." Then the dogs howled and growled several times, pushed their noses in the hole, and finally left with their masters. Peter breathed easier and his brother sighed several times.

Poor little fellow, this was a new experience to him, and it all frightened him very much indeed. You see, he did not know what to expect next.

"Now, Bunny," said Mother Owl, "you said something about the snow. Don't like snow? Well, well, well, you will when you see more of it. Don't complain, for Mother Earth might not like it. You see

it is her white dress, and Grandmother Nature thinks it is very fine."

Peter Rabbit frowned at his brother and then said he couldn't get along without snow. He had had



"BELOW 32, THEN THE FROST ELVES GET BUSY"

oceans and oceans of fun in it, and he was sure Bunny would, too, when he had the chance.

"Please explain to Bunny about Mother Earth's white dress and her diamonds which she makes out of

water," begged Peter, "for I never could explain it to anybody."

"Mother Earth gets a white dress every year. It does her and her children good to have a change, for they soon tire of green, and brown, and red, so Grandmother Nature has made a plan of having the snow come at winter time. When the air begins to feel chilly, or according to the farmer's thermometer, gets to a certain point that he calls 'below 32 degrees,' then the frost elves get very busy. You know that dew is a moisture that comes in the night on everything outdoors in the summer time, and when this is frozen it is called frost, all because the air is below 32 degrees. Snow is frozen vapor or clouds which fall in the form of flakes, and such beautiful things snowflakes are when you look at them closely. They resemble little stars, but are also a great many other shapes. Just think, Bunny Cottontail, how many of these snowflakes it takes to make Mother Earth a dress."

"My, oh, my!" said Peter, "isn't that wonderful?"

"And every snowflake is a little white fairy, isn't it, Mother Owl?"

"Yes," said Mother Owl, "a very beautiful fairy which does many useful things, Peter."

There was another loud barking of that hound. Mother Owl looked out in time to see one of Peter Rabbit's uncles run across the fields where there was a large rock pile in which he could hide. Peter closed his eyes until Mother Owl said his uncle was safe.

"You'll have to stay here," said Mother Owl, "and wait till it grows dark. It won't be safe for you to run any chances with that hound. I could tell you many, many other things about how Mother Earth prepares her cool drinks, but, oh, it would take so long, and perhaps we will have a chance another time."

The sun had gone down and darkness was setting in when Peter and Bunny slid down that tree and began to play tag with each other in the snow. How happy they were! The snow was soft like velvet, and both of them had on heavy clothes, for rabbits, you know, dress up warm when it begins to get cold. They had

a fine time before their mother called them and told them it was time to go to bed. Bunny said that he would never again complain about so wonderful a thing as snow.

And that white dress, which is made of snow, has been taken as a symbol of purity ever since it first came.

The Strange Baby

MOTHER OWL was very sleepy when Johnny Jay came to her house. But Johnny makes so much noise that no one can sleep. When she opened her eyes and saw him sitting on a limb but a few feet away and wiping his bill just as if he would like to ask a question or two, she felt a little vexed toward Johnny.

"Well, Johnny Blue Jay, what ails you?"

"Nothing at all, Mother Owl. But I have been wondering about something all day. Perhaps you can tell me about it."

Now Johnny Blue Jay was a young fellow and had not seen much of the world, but he had seen Mrs. Dove feeding a very queer sort of baby. It was not

one of her own children. To make it seem more strange he had overheard both Mrs. Meadow Lark and Mrs. Field Sparrow talking about a strange baby in their nests. All three of these housekeepers did not know what to do about taking care of strange children in their nests. He had seen the one in Mrs. Dove's nest, so he felt sure there was no mistake about it. This baby was very much larger and did not look at all like Mrs. Dove's children.

Mother Owl listened until Johnny had finished telling about it and then she closed her eyes and laughed. "Why, Johnny, I don't wonder that you are surprised about it. Even Mrs. Meadow Lark and Mrs. Sparrow have never kept house until this summer and so have never had such a thing happen before. They will soon find out whose children those are in their nests. Mrs. Dove, poor soul, lost all her eggs this year by this meddlesome bird who knocked one of her eggs out of the nest and then laid one.

"Mrs. Dove never did know who did it, for it was her first attempt at housekeeping. This strange egg

"MRS. DOVE, POOR SOUL, LOST ALL HER EGGS THIS YEAR".

was in her nest when she returned from hunting food one day. She couldn't help wondering about it. She knew the egg was not her own. It almost broke her poor little heart, but she decided to make the best of it and sat on that strange egg until it hatched to see what it turned out to be. The same thing is going on right now in both Mrs. Lark's and Mrs. Sparrow's nests. Neither of them knows who the strange baby is in their nests.

"This strange baby is a young cow-bird. Its mother goes all round looking for nests to lay eggs in. She waits until the owner gets off to get something to eat and then she gets on the nest and lays one of her own eggs. It saves her the trouble of building a nest of her own, and besides she don't have to sit for several weeks hatching out her eggs. She makes some other bird do it. Oh, how lazy she is!

"This cow-bird lays an egg in a nest and then goes to look for another until she has laid five or six eggs, each in different nests. Of course when the eggs are hatched the bird who hatches them feeds the young

bird as well as her own. A mother cow-bird does not know what it is to raise her own children.

"She goes about like that every year, making other people be stepmothers to her children, and she never even asks the other birds whether they want the job.

"They are called cow-birds because they are so often seen with cattle. While the cows are eating they scare up a great many insects which the cow-bird catches. You can see for yourself, Johnny Blue Jay, that this cow-bird is lazy. It won't look for its food, it depends upon some other bird to build a nest for it to lay in, and expects some other bird to hatch its eggs and feed its children."

"What shall we do with it?" asked Johnny, who felt very cross.

"We can't do a thing about it," answered Mother Owl. "Grandmother Nature knows why she wants it to do the way it does, but I'm sure I don't."

Johnny Blue Jay wouldn't stay another minute, because he was very anxious to see that strange baby once more.

He knew very well that when it grew up it would turn out to be just as lazy as its mother, even though it was hatched by Mrs. Dove and fed just as she fed her own nice children. Johnny did not always do nice things himself, but he was very cross at so selfish a bird.

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